

## THE FINGER OF FATE

BY GEORGE WESTON

ILLUSTRATED BY ARTHUR WILLIAM BROWN

A Tale of Mystery Concerning a Jilted Suitor, a Dozen Photographs and a Charming Girl

MELLY'S first idea had been flight—to get away from these stately mansions by the Hudson and lose himself in the great city below.

"To look at me," he thought, with a groan, as he turned into the upper reaches of Broadway, "one would never think that I had been wounded so." And indeed he was right. Except for his expression, which had something pathetic in it, you would never have suspected that he had just been dealt a mortal wound.

"Marry you after this?" Margaret had said to him. "Not if you were the last man on earth!" Which wasn't exactly original, when all is said and done. "We have absolutely nothing in common," she had continued, watching him closely for wincing; "you can't talk; you can't write; you can't understand; you can't take a joke; you can't dance." He winced then. "I don't believe that a tumbler man could do better than I do," Old Bumblfoot said. They call you—

"It's a lie," he had growled. The next moment she had given him back his ring and Mell had left her with the face of a man who is hurrying out to self-destruction.

"Don't do anything rash," she had called after him mockingly. "I'd like to see you try," he scoffed, as he swung down Madison avenue. In his resentment, Mell didn't notice that his speedometer was trembling around 40, nor did he see the three enormous trucks that were coming out of the side street, one closely following the other like three friendly mastodons going down to the river to drink.

"And night after night," he stepped upon his brake. It was too late. Ahead of him the three Leviathans completely blocked the street. To the right was a lamp post and a photographer's shop. Mell looked at the trucks and he looked at the post.

As Mell's perceptions grew clearer he became aware that his resting place was a photographer's dressing room, and that, bending over him, was a doctor and a business-like young woman, who was evidently in charge of the shop.

"A narrow escape," said the doctor. It seemed to Mell that the good physician spoke almost with regret—though this no doubt was imagination, for he was still light-headed.

"How's the car?" he asked in a small, faint voice. "The wreck," said the doctor. "Would you like us to take a photograph of it?" eagerly inquired the young woman.

Mell weakly nodded—in a way it was a sort of repayment for her hospitality—and she and the doctor went out.

"Seems like a nightmare," said Mell, who was feeling as though he would float if he tried to walk, "and I guess it will be a nightmare, too, when Aunt Agnes hears about the car." His mind returning then to the causes he added: "Luckily I wasn't killed, or Margaret would always have thought that I had done it because she said—"

He drew a deep breath and looked up at the framed photographs that hung on the wall. He had been in an hour to get those careless-looking poses," he thought, with the grin. "But say—here's a peach."

The photograph over the couch at which he was sitting showed a quiet, serious-eyed girl who was standing by a table on which a potted plant stood. The girl was looking up at the camera with adoring eyes. It couldn't have been her dress that attracted Mell, for it was evidently a dark suit of the simplest possible design—and it couldn't have been her hair, which was nothing but a dark straw with a few strands of ribbon around it. And it couldn't have been her studied pose, for she had none.

He was still looking at the picture, deep calling to deep, although he didn't know it—when the brisk young manager entered the room. "But," she said, "how many prints would you like?"

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way, she had always made a pet of Master Mell.

"This may sound nice, but it very often wastes for Aunt Agnes was one of those thorough old ladies who love and hate with equal intensity—and everything she didn't love, she hated, and did it well, too. She had a commanding voice when excited, and such a manner that even the servants referred to her with unconscious awe as 'the madam.'"

"I wonder what she'll say," thought Mell, "when she hears about the car." He had decided to stay in the city until the storm had a chance to blow over, and had written his aunt an account of his adventure with the lamp post. Mrs. Van Ransselaer was staying that summer at the old family manor on the Hudson, her house on Park avenue being closed until her return in October. So Mell had gone to his club and there he waited for Aunt Agnes' lightning to strike him.

He didn't have long to wait. "Dear Melville," she wrote back. "I'm glad you didn't hurt yourself. I happened to be in the room when Margaret received your photograph. What a beautiful girl!"

"I shall come to New York next Monday," she wrote back. "I shall come to New York next Monday."

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day afternoon on the 4 o'clock train, and shall stay a day or two. Please go to the house and have the car fixed. I'll be there when I come. I should like to meet this 'Molly' of yours. I was furious, but when I saw the photograph you sent her, I began to forgive you."

Mell read the letter three times and then he slowly turned to one of the remaining eleven photographs. "Young lady," said the girl, "I'm looking up at the camera with adoring eyes. It couldn't have been her dress that attracted Mell, for it was evidently a dark suit of the simplest possible design—and it couldn't have been her hair, which was nothing but a dark straw with a few strands of ribbon around it. And it couldn't have been her studied pose, for she had none."

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his aunt's house. Perhaps you can imagine his astonishment when Molly suddenly joined him there, her hand upon his arm and a look of terror in the depths of her eyes.

"What are you going to do?" she gasped, and he noticed that her breath came quickly.

"I'm going," he replied. "This is my aunt's house—she's coming into town this afternoon."

"Oh, I didn't know," she added. "Please don't go in now," she added. "It's too late for a walk. I want to show you something—over on 5th avenue. Let's go for a nice, long walk; shall we?"

"I might as well be dimly, but Mell began to see that something was wrong, and all the old suspicious returned. With a sudden air of relief, he turned to the grilled door that led to the basement, the key already in his hand.

"What are you going to do?" begged Molly, at his side in an instant.

"I'm going in," he sternly replied. "One of her hands closed round his wrist and the other raised to her lips a silver whistle that hung on the end of the Pom's leash. But before she could blow, Mell's free arm around her elbows and pinned them helpless against her quivering body.

"Look here," he said, "sternly as before, 'who's in this house?'"

"It's Dad," she told him with a broken cry.

When Aunt Agnes had written that she would arrive on the four o'clock train that day, Mell had overlooked the fact that owing to local daylight-saving ordinances clocks and trains don't always run together. According to the watch in his pocket, there were only ten minutes past three when he suddenly discovered that there was a rather disturbing matter of fact.

Aunt Agnes had caught an earlier train than she had expected and at that very moment was in a taxi speeding along to her Park avenue home.

At first, when Molly had told him who was in the house, Mell thought she had fainted, the life seemed to go out of the body which was still

confined within his cowering arm. He hastily unlocked the door and he half carried her inside. "Now, you sit here," he said, guiding her to a chair near the window, and by the time he had put her down, he was upstairs, perhaps you'll feel better, and we'll be able to talk this thing over."

He went up to the floor above, but caught no sight of an intruder. Once he thought he heard a noise in the basement. "Molly, I guess," he thought, "that she was making her escape, he drew a bitter sigh and started for the floor above."

Old Bumblfoot, first, he mourned to himself, and then Molly, the Yeggsman's beautiful daughter—I'm not very lucky in love."

THE second floor, too, seemed empty, and after a cautious search Mell started up another flight. He was nearly at the top of the stairs when a movement in the main hall below caught his eye, over the banisters.

Two floors below Molly had held of the arm of a silk-hatted old gentleman, the Yeggsman's beautiful daughter—I'm not very lucky in love."

"I'm going to get a look at that old boy," muttered Mell, as he skirted down the stairs. The carpet was thick and apparently neither Molly nor her father heard him coming. As Mell approached them from behind, the old gentleman was busy with the lock of the front door, and was evidently having trouble with it.

"I wonder why they don't go down through the basement," thought Mell. From outside came the noise of a taxi bristling with footpads, and a firm, ascending footstep was heard on the basement stairs.

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next moment his aunt's words claimed all his attention.

"So this is Molly!" said Aunt Agnes. Molly gave a startled look, her eyes were wide with fear.

"Don't be frightened, child," said Aunt Agnes kindly. She held out both hands and, drawing the astonished girl to her, she said, "I trust if I had been arrested, I don't think he would have cared much, because it would have given publicity to the fact that he was a thief."

"Anyhow, owners began to complain that the lock wasn't any good as a protection against a thief who had been arrested, and sales fell off enormously."

"Did she have a few warm friends in the company and yesterday, just before we left New York, he had a visit from two of them. The other partners are willing to sell out now for anything they can get, and his friends want to go back and take control, and reorganize the company."

"He certainly is a wonder," said Mell, laughing, "but then I might have known that he was—"

"Because he has such a wonderful dash about him," she said, "and he's a first-class fellow."

They walked along then for a time in silence, and somehow their hands met—and somehow, too, they believed that they were holding hands.

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## THE MIRRORS OF DOWNING STREET

SOME POLITICAL REFLECTIONS

By "A Gentleman With a Duster."

## LORD FISHER.

Baron Fisher, admiral of the fleet (John Arthur Fisher, born, 1843; entered navy, 1864; took part in 1890 battle of Tsushima; 1895; 1896; 1897; 1898; 1899; 1900; 1901; 1902; 1903; 1904; 1905; 1906; 1907; 1908; 1909; 1910; 1911; 1912; 1913; 1914; 1915; 1916; 1917; 1918; 1919; 1920; 1921; 1922; 1923; 1924; 1925; 1926; 1927; 1928; 1929; 1930; 1931; 1932; 1933; 1934; 1935; 1936; 1937; 1938; 1939; 1940; 1941; 1942; 1943; 1944; 1945; 1946; 1947; 1948; 1949; 1950; 1951; 1952; 1953; 1954; 1955; 1956; 1957; 1958; 1959; 1960; 1961; 1962; 1963; 1964; 1965; 1966; 1967; 1968; 1969; 1970; 1971; 1972; 1973; 1974; 1975; 1976; 1977; 1978; 1979; 1980; 1981; 1982; 1983; 1984; 1985; 1986; 1987; 1988; 1989; 1990; 1991; 1992; 1993; 1994; 1995; 1996; 1997; 1998; 1999; 2000; 2001; 2002; 2003; 2004; 2005; 2006; 2007; 2008; 2009; 2010; 2011; 2012; 2013; 2014; 2015; 2016; 2017; 2018; 2019; 2020; 2021; 2022; 2023; 2024; 2025; 2026; 2027; 2028; 2029; 2030; 2031; 2032; 2033; 2034; 2035; 2036; 2037; 2038; 2039; 2040; 2041; 2042; 2043; 2044; 2045; 2046; 2047; 2048; 2049; 2050; 2051; 2052; 2053; 2054; 2055; 2056; 2057; 2058; 2059; 2060; 2061; 2062; 2063; 2064; 2065; 2066; 2067; 2068; 2069; 2070; 2071; 2072; 2073; 2074; 2075; 2076; 2077; 2078; 2079; 2080; 2081; 2082; 2083; 2084; 2085; 2086; 2087; 2088; 2089; 2090; 2091; 2092; 2093; 2094; 2095; 2096; 2097; 2098; 2099; 2100; 2101; 2102; 2103; 2104; 2105; 2106; 2107; 2108; 2109; 2110; 2111; 2112; 2113; 2114; 2115; 2116; 2117; 2118; 2119; 2120; 2121; 2122; 2123; 2124; 2125; 2126; 2127; 2128; 2129; 2130; 2131; 2132; 2133; 2134; 2135; 2136; 2137; 2138; 2139; 2140; 2141; 2142; 2143; 2144; 2145; 2146; 2147; 2148; 2149; 2150; 2151; 2152; 2153; 2154; 2155; 2156; 2157; 2158; 2159; 2160; 2161; 2162; 2163; 2164; 2165; 2166; 2167; 2168; 2169; 2170; 2171; 2172; 2173; 2174; 2175; 2176; 2177; 2178; 2179; 2180; 2181; 2182; 2183; 2184; 2185; 2186; 2187; 2188; 2189; 2190; 2191; 2192; 2193; 2194; 2195; 2196; 2197; 2198; 2199; 2200; 2201; 2202; 2203; 2204; 2205; 2206; 2207; 2208; 2209; 2210; 2211; 2212; 2213; 2214; 2215; 2216; 2217; 2218; 2219; 2220; 2221; 2222; 2223; 2224; 2225; 2226; 2227; 2228; 2229; 2230; 2231; 2232; 2233; 2234; 2235; 2236; 2237; 2238; 2239; 2240; 2241; 2242; 2243; 2244; 2245; 2246; 2247; 2248; 2249; 2250; 2251; 2252; 2253; 2254; 2255; 2256; 2257; 2258; 2259; 2260; 2261; 2262; 2263; 2264; 2265; 2266; 2267; 2268; 2269; 2270; 2271; 2272; 2273; 2274; 2275; 2276; 2277; 2278; 2279; 2280; 2281; 2282; 2283; 2284; 2285; 2286; 2287; 2288; 2289; 2290; 2291; 2292; 2293; 2294; 2295; 2296; 2297; 2298; 2299; 2300; 2301; 2302; 2303; 2304; 2305; 2306; 2307; 2308; 2309; 2310; 2311; 2312; 2313; 2314; 2315; 2316; 2317; 2318; 2319; 2320; 2321; 2322; 2323; 2324; 2325; 2326; 2327; 2328; 2329; 2330; 2331; 2332; 2333; 2334; 2335; 2336; 2337; 2338; 2339; 2340; 2341; 2342; 2343; 2344; 2345; 2346; 2347; 2348; 2349; 2350; 2351; 2352; 2353; 2354; 2355; 2356; 2357; 2358; 2359; 2360; 2361; 2362; 2363; 2364; 2365; 2366; 2367; 2368; 2369; 2370; 2371; 2372; 2373; 2374; 2375; 2376; 2377; 2378; 2379; 2380; 2381; 2382; 2383; 2384; 2385; 2386; 2387; 2388; 2389; 2390; 2391; 2392; 2393; 2394; 2395; 2396; 2397; 2398; 2399; 2400; 2401; 2402; 2403; 2404; 2405; 2406; 2407; 2408; 2409; 2410; 2411; 2412; 2413; 2414; 2415; 2416; 2417; 2418; 2419; 2420; 2421; 2422; 2423; 2424; 2425; 2426; 2427; 2428; 2429; 2430; 2431; 2432; 2433; 2434; 2435; 2436; 2437; 2438; 2439; 2440; 2441; 2442; 2443; 2444; 2445; 2446; 2447; 2448; 2449; 2450; 2451; 2452; 2453; 2454; 2455; 2456; 2457; 2458; 2459; 2460; 2461; 2462; 2463; 2464; 2465; 2466; 2467; 2468; 2469; 2470; 2471; 2472; 2473; 2474; 2475; 2476; 2477; 2478; 2479; 2480; 2481; 2482; 2483; 2484; 24